

**Société internationale de recherches Emmanuel Levinas (SIREL, Paris)  
North American Levinas Society (NALS, USA)**

**International Conference: "Readings of *Difficult Freedom*"**

**July 5–9, 2010 | Toulouse, France**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

First published in 1963, with a second edition in 1976, *Difficile Liberté, Essais sur le judaïsme* is considered Levinas' most accessible book and an excellent introduction to his work. This collection of essays, which appeared in a variety of journals (*L'arche, Information juive, L'esprit, Evidences*, etc.) reflects the society, culture and philosophy of France from the 1950s to the 1970s. While closely linked to this era (end of World War II, the discovery of the horror of the concentration camps, Stalinism, the founding of the State of Israel) *Difficile Liberté* is by no means a collection of circumstantial writings.

In *Difficile Liberté* Levinas defines post-Holocaust Judaism, and sets out the requirements and need for Jewish thought and education in an authentic but critical dialogue with modern society. These considerations are frequently interspersed with references to writers and thinkers who influenced Levinas such as Claudel, Heidegger, Hegel, Spinoza, S. Weil, Gordin and Rosenzweig, but more often to sacred texts, the Bible and the words of the Sages of Israel which Levinas continually emphasized the need to study. Does Levinas' *modernity* paradoxically lie in his appeal to Jews to return to these old "worm-eaten tractates" ("the Jew of the Talmud should take precedence over the Jew of the Psalms")? These articles are still innovative, sharp, concise and overarching; the style is sometimes lyrical – Levinas rarely wrote in such a strident, argumentative way, blending conviction and stupefaction. The key to what unites Levinas' work – the link between his philosophical writings and his specifically Jewish dimension – may just be found in *Difficile Liberté*.

Beyond the obligatory analysis of the title (taken from the last few words of the article "Education and Prayer") this conference aims not only to place the essays in *Difficult Freedom* in their historical context and within the trajectory of Levinas' thought, but more importantly to examine them afresh – with the wonderment and questions they still elicit today. Diachronic and synchronic analyses of the articles in *Difficile Liberté* will help situate them with respect to Levinas' other works. Issues such as the following could be explored:

**Phenomenology, ethics, the Holocaust, Israel, the Talmudic Readings, Levinas' views of science and technology, his relationship to Heidegger, Rosenzweig, Bergson, French philosophers and writers, Levinas' relationship to Christianity, Levinas the educator, etc...**

This international conference is an initiative of the Société internationale de Recherches Emmanuel Levinas (SIREL, Paris, [www.sirel-levinas.org](http://www.sirel-levinas.org)), and the North American Levinas Society (Purdue, USA, [www.levinas-society.org](http://www.levinas-society.org)). The conference will host participants from all over the world, with 120 projected presentations. Priority will be given to students and young researchers. The proceedings will be published (articles selected by the editorial committee). If funding permits, some financial aid may be made available, in particular to young researchers.

**SUBMISSION DUE DATES**

1. **On or before September 30, 2009:** submission of a 500-word abstract (talks will be 20 minutes, in French or in English) and a short bio-bibliography of the author (s).
2. **On or before November 15, 2009:** notification, based on the decision of the scientific committee.
3. **February 2010:** publication of conference program.

**all submissions (preferably as Microsoft Word files)**

**and questions concerning the conference should be sent electronically to: [dlib2010@gmail.com](mailto:dlib2010@gmail.com)**